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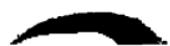
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Three Sermons,
Preached in times of
Public Anxiety.

45. 779.







THREE SERMONS,

PREACHED IN

TIMES OF PUBLIC ANXIETY.

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By the same Author.

AN
APOLOGY FOR THE DOCTRINE
OF
APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.
WITH AN APPENDIX, ON THE ENGLISH ORDERS.

SERMON I.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S, BEFORE THE
QUEEN'S MAJESTY.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATT. vi. 33.

THESE gracious and comfortable words were spoken by the Redeemer of mankind, the Head and Founder of the Christian Church,* for the sake of dispelling from the minds of His faithful followers, the members of His Church, those clouds of earth-born care, anxiety, and apprehension which never fail to harass carnal and worldly persons; who, being destitute of the grace of God, are unable to lift their eyes, or raise their thoughts, beyond the consideration of second

* Ephes. v. 23.

causes, to the dishonour and neglect of the great First Cause, who overrules the affairs of earth* as well as of heaven, and causes all things to work together for good† to those who love Him ; to those who having been called by Him to the adoption of sons,‡ by the sacrament of Holy Baptism, strive to walk worthy§ of their glorious calling, as heirs of GOD and joint heirs with CHRIST,|| strengthening themselves by participation in the Holy Eucharist, with that spiritual food¶ which nourishes unto eternal life.

They are indeed words of grace and comfort. To speak to their general meaning they amount to this : that, as long as we make GOD the chief object of our lives, and strive to order our conduct with a view to His glory, we shall never want a friend able and willing to supply all our wants : “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ; ”** we shall place ourselves under

* Dan. iv. 17. † Romans viii. 28. ‡ Gal. iv. 5

§ Ephes. iv. 1. || Romans viii. 17. ¶ 1 Cor. x. 16.

** Heb. xiii. 5.

the immediate and special protection of Him who has “ all power in heaven and in earth,”* and, in that confidence, may go on our way calmly and cheerfully under any and all circumstances. How great a comfort this gracious promise is they only can say who have made trial of it,† but there is no station which does not need it,—none too high, none too low, to derive advantage from it. Take the case of the poor peasant, who lives from hand to mouth, and whose whole maintenance, and that of his family, depends upon his labour ; who knows not from day to day that he will continue in health to pursue his labour, nor that he will continue to have labour to do ; who sees his family increasing upon him, with no more certain prospects of supply than the fowls of the air. What, but confidence in the care of his Heavenly Father, can enable a man in such circumstances to go on his way with peace and

* Matt. xxviii. 18.

† Psalms, xxiv. 8.

hope? to bear his lot with resignation and contentment, and thankfulness; and to resist the temptations which might naturally arise in his mind to evil thoughts and evil deeds of various kinds? With the promises of GOD in view, those gracious promises which true religion, as taught by the Christian Church, sets forth before the servants of GOD, he is able to do this, and to feel sure that as long as he seeks GOD, and puts his trust in Him, all that is necessary shall be supplied to him. But he who is destitute of these sacred principles of true religion is destitute also of the comfort which they afford. Such a man, under such circumstances, is a prey to every evil passion, to envy and discontent, to murmuring and complaining, to covetousness and dishonesty, and is a ready and willing instrument, fitted for those evil men and evil spirits, who are ever on the watch to take advantage of men's weakness and distress, to goad them into acts of sin.

Who does not see from this, how deeply the

interest, not of individuals only, but of the whole nation, is concerned, in implanting in the hearts of the people those principles of true religion, which at once afford comfort to them, and security to all around them? and that those men must therefore be the greatest enemies to their country, as well as to their GOD, who would seek to undermine or weaken the hold which true religion has upon the hearts of the people? Let us see, in another instance, the beneficial effect of implanting in the mind the gracious principle contained in our text Consider the case of a merchant embarking the fortunes of his family in ships, and committing all he has to the mercy of the winds and waves, out of his sight, beyond his control or protection. The man whose chief care is placed in this world's goods, and who, consequently, knows little of the power, grace, and goodness of GOD within him, will be anxious and fretful, distrustful and apprehensive at every storm; impatient, murmuring, and discontented at

every loss. But he who has learned to seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, is relieved from such harassing fears ; for he knows and feels that he is under the protection of Him who commands the winds and waves, and without whose permission not a sail can be torn nor a sheet stranded. And though he does not expect to be free from the common share of trouble to which man is born, yet he knows that the providence of GOD, whom he has chosen as his chief Friend, can and will overrule all for good, will make even crosses and losses instruments of blessing, and sends them for no other end than to correct those whom He loves,* and to improve and increase the faith of His servants. In this confidence he calmly awaits the result, being sure that the promise in the text can never fail; and that though it may not be fulfilled in the way he looks for, yet fulfilled it will be, in the way most calculated to advance his best and truest interests.

* Prov. iii. 12.

But it is not only in the way of comfort that this confidence and belief of God's special providence to those who trust in Him acts ; it acts also in the way of restraint, and obliges the man who entertains it to use all reasonable prudence and circumspection, and industry, as knowing that he cannot otherwise reasonably expect a blessing. It restrains him, therefore, from all rash ventures and speculations,—above all, from all crooked and questionable courses ; and thus the same principle of religion which is a comfort and security to himself, is a security also to all about him, and a pledge to his country that, as far as he is concerned, her credit shall sustain no shock. Thus plainly does it appear, in this instance also, how much the interest of a nation is concerned in the implanting the fear of GOD, and those true principles of religion, which the Church is ordained to teach, in the breasts of the middling, as well as the lower, classes of its members, and in the teaching all, even those most engaged in this

world's traffic, still to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, in the confidence that so long as they do this, all of this world's goods, which will benefit them, will be added thereto.

But they are not only the middling and the lower classes of society who may draw comfort from the principles in the text, and receive profit by it. Those in the higher, and in the highest, have equal, yea, far greater need to drink at that gracious spring, and to refresh themselves by it for the duties of their stations. When I say this, I have respect not only to the general difficulty which earthly riches and earthly honours place in the way of men's salvation, so that our Lord himself should say: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God;?"* and again, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God;?"* but I am led to make the observa-

* Luke xviii. 24-25.

tion, from considering that in the higher stations of life, among those who are called public men, principles of action have sometimes been broached and defended, which I believe have not been received in other classes of society,—such as, if not set aside and guarded against, must enhance, beyond all calculation, the difficulty of their salvation. And as the congregation which I am addressing is in great measure composed of persons of that station of society from which public men are generally taken, the time will not be misapplied in calling attention to the subject. That which I have in view is the distinction which statesmen and legislators have at times avowedly drawn and acted upon, between their conduct as public men, and their conduct as private men; so that, while they have confessed that they were bound to govern the last according to conscience, and the fear of God, they have allowed themselves to act and speak as if in the former they need be under no such restraint, but might lay conscience aside,

and do as the world bids them, and consult what is called human expediency, to the utter disregard of Christian principle.

Surely, the arch-enemy of mankind, when in the garden of Eden, he said, "Ye shall not surely die," did not palm upon the first mother of our race, a more utter and fatal delusion, than when he suggests to the heart, or by evil agents whispers into the ears of public men, this juggling distinction between a private and a public conscience. The world must be come to second childhood, when grown up, educated, and professedly Christian men can advocate or act upon it, and "have need that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God."*

The error of the Pharisees was near of kin to this, though it took an opposite direction. They fancied, that if they made a conscience of the outward part, they might be careless of the

* Hebrew v. 12.

inward. We know the reproof which the King of Glory gave them, “ Ye fools, did not He who made that which is without, make that which is within also ?”* And if our Lord were now on earth, have we not reason to think, that, in like manner, He would address any who should draw the distinction we are considering, between their conduct as public men and as private men, and ask them, “ Ye fools, does not He who regardeth that which you do as private men, regard that which you do as public men also ?” It would be well for any public men who can thus persuade themselves that they have two consciences, with one of which they can afford to trifle, if they had also two souls, one of which they could afford to lose. I have said that the other classes of society have not received this principle: the ground for which assertion is, that though I have often heard of unfair tradesmen, I have never yet heard of one justifying

* Luke xi. 40.

his misconduct in the public market, by alleging a distinction between his private conscience to his family, and his public one to his customers; nor am I aware that our peasants have ever maintained such a plea, in justification of their misdeeds. How, then, can men in high stations allow themselves to suppose, that God will deal with them, by a different measure from that which, they make no doubt, He will apply to their brethren? But to show, in the strongest light, the absurdity and monstrous nature of such a distinction, let us suppose that the judges of the land, who are sent to administer justice in our sovereign's name, were to put forth this principle of a double conscience, and so long as they were decent men in private society, think themselves at liberty to pervert judgment and justice in public. All men, I think, would regard such conduct as impious and execrable. But is, then, that which would be hated of God and man in one who administers the laws, to be justified and defended in those who frame them?

Is there, indeed, in the sight of God and man, so vast a difference between the legislative and executive functions, that while the latter must be discharged according to justice and the fear of God, the former may be ordered by self-interest, party spirit, faction, and the fear of men? If we regard the glory of God, none can deny that His servants are bound to consult His glory at all times; nor if we regard the welfare of men, can any deny that they are more injured by bad laws than by an ill administration of good ones. An evil judge only affects the few whose cases come under his cognizance, and offers, in his own person, dishonour to the Lord; but evil lawgivers affect all who are under the control of the laws which they frame, and involve a whole nation in sin against God and man.

But it is not merely for the glory of God, though that consideration alone ought to be all-sufficient; it is not only for the good of others, it is not only for both these considerations to-

gether, that men who are concerned in the making of laws, are bound to cast aside from them with detestation the false and fatal distinction between a public and a private conscience; it is for their own welfare, their own peace of mind, their own safety, that this is necessary. The history of our own country records so sad an instance of the miserable effects following the adoption of this subtle and dangerous distinction, that it may well lead all who read it to shun and avoid the same, and to profit by the experience of others, instead of enduring the purchase of that experience by the anguish of their own breasts. I allude to the well known case of one who, when urged to assist in making a law, which in a moment of party spleen and excitement had been brought before him, and which he knew to be contrary to his conscience, was beguiled into acting contrary to his conscience, by the plea which a treacherous adviser suggested to him, "that there was a public and a private conscience,

and that his public conscience, as a [lawgiver], might not only dispense with, but oblige him to do, that which was against his conscience as a man.”* The unhappy individual in an evil hour suffered himself to be overcome by this argument, and for the sake of pleasing those who preferred political expediency to Christian principle, did a deed as a legislator which was against his conscience as a Christian; but vainly strove to cover it by the subtle distinction between a public and a private conscience. In consenting to that deed, he would have sacrificed his own salvation, but that his heavenly Father, who had compassion on his weakness, gave him the gift of true repentance, a pledge of eternal pardon; but yet He would not let him go altogether unpunished. It was with him, as in the first lesson of to-day we read it was with David, as he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,† by

* Clarend. Hist. vol. i. p. 202. † 2 Samuel xii. 14.

dishonouring Him in the high places of the earth, so was he punished likewise in the same. His worldly affairs never afterwards prospered; and the remorse which he endured on account of that deed, embittered all the sufferings which God permitted him to undergo at the hands of those misguided men, whom he had vainly sought to conciliate by violating the dictates of his conscience. We may well believe, that it was not the hard usage he endured from his enemies, but the disquiet of his own heart, that prematurely changed the colour of his hair; certainly, we know that his conduct on that occasion weighed on his mind to the last period of his existence, so that, when his own death was contrived by those very men who had beguiled and constrained him to do evil, and who, like Satan himself, triumphed in the misery of one whom they had first persuaded to sin, he acknowledged the justice of the retribution against himself; while twenty years of blood-shed, strife, and confusion, recorded in charac-

ters which he may run that readeth, the wrath of GOD against a nation, which for their sins he had delivered up to the counsels of those who could openly avow and defend, and could force upon others to adopt, the false and impious distinction of which we are speaking.

“These things were our examples, to the intent we should not” do the evil which they did ;* and if such as we have been considering have been the miserable effects which they who have adopted this false principle have thereby brought upon themselves, and upon their country, I see not how a Christian minister can more faithfully discharge his duty towards those who are, or may be, called to legislative functions, and consequently to the temptation of the same deceit, than by warning them plainly against it : that whether such a false principle suggest itself to their own minds, they may know that it is of Satan, coming up from the chambers of death :

* 1 Cor. x. 6.

or whether it be suggested to them by others, they may account such men as no safe guides, but be ever on their guard against them, being sure that they can be no true friends, who for any temporary interest, or for their own selfish purposes, would encourage a human being to trifle with his conscience, and hazard his eternal salvation. And ever remembering those startling words of our Lord—"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* let them, in their public, as well as in their private capacity, adopt the only principle worthy of Christian men; that, namely, which our text has commended to our notice. Let them in every public act take care first that the honour of ALMIGHTY GOD, and truth, and justice, be upheld; and then let them find room, if they please, for the exercise of those different views of worldly policy, which, being the result of mere human wisdom, must

* Mark viii. 36.

needs commend themselves differently to different men. So only can they be quite sure that they will have secured the welfare of their country, when, by the adoption of this principle, they shall have placed it and all its concerns under the immediate and special protection of Him by whom nations rise and fall. Thus deeply is a nation interested in having the principles of true religion, which the Christian Church is ordained to teach, implanted in the minds of the higher and highest classes of society, as we have before seen that it is, in respect of the middling and lowest.

Of this no Christian man should need to be informed : that, as surely as the GOD whom he worships is but *one*, so is his own body and soul and spirit but *one* also, which must account to GOD hereafter for all that he has done here below. The covenant of service, wherewith we became bound when we entered into the family of GOD by holy baptism, was full and entire, leaving no room for distinction between public

and private transactions ; and the vows where-
with, again and again, we have renewed that
covenant, when in the service of the Holy
Eucharist, " we offer and present unto Thee, O
LORD, ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a
reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee,"
equally preclude that subtle and dangerous
deceit.

But leaving this especial ground why those
who occupy what are called public stations
should lay to heart the principle of our text, let
us consider their general need of so doing. Take
the case of those who are called to posts of
trust and importance in the sight of GOD and
man, upon whose counsels, or upon whose will,
the happiness of millions depends. What human
being, in such a situation, conscious of his own
weakness, and, at the same time, conscious of
the extent of good, or of evil, dependent upon
the course which he might choose, would not be
naturally overwhelmed with a sense of the
responsibility, and inclined to be cast down, and

to exclaim, as every conscientious Christian minister is at times compelled to exclaim, with St. Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?"* And unless he were fortified by the gracious assurance contained in our text, and enabled to apply to himself the words of consolation addressed to St. Paul, " My grace is sufficient for thee,"† would he not be tempted to weak irresolution, or to desperate carelessness ?

But he who has learned the gracious truth contained in our text, has found therein a stay and rest for his soul, which under every circumstance of difficulty will afford him support. Strong in that confidence, he has no need to be dismayed. If he seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, he knows that everything he has, and everything he does, will receive a blessing from the LORD. He need not sigh for greater years, or more experience, or a larger share of human wisdom: the blessing of his

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.

† Ibid. xii. 9.

heavenly Father, “ Whose he is, and whom he strives to serve,”* will furnish all this ; in the sweet words of the Apostle, “ My GOD shall supply all your need.”† For, as the wisdom of Solomon saith, “ Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years ; but wisdom,” the fear of God, “ is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age ;”‡ for “ the fear of God that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.”§ And therefore David speaks, “ I have more understanding than my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments ;|| for Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.”¶ Yea, seek first the kingdom of GOD, and then you may lie down safely, and your sleep shall be sweet ; in the

* Acts xxvii. 23.

† Phil. iv. 19.

‡ Wisdom iv. 8-9.

§ Job xxviii. 28.

|| Ps. cxix. 99-100.

¶ Ibid. 24.

words of one of our gracious sovereigns, we may say to such an one—

“ Close thine eyes, and sleep secure,
Thy soul is safe, thy body sure ;
He now guards thee, He thee keeps
Who never slumbers, never sleeps.
A quiet conscience, in a quiet breast,
Has only peace, has only rest.
The music, and the mirth of kings,
Are out of tune unless she sings.”*

Or we may apply to such a man, a living member of the true Church of God, those words which, in spirit, the Evangelical Prophet addressed to the Church—“ Fear not, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest though the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy SAVIOUR.”† It is not said that the service of God, however true and faithful, will keep trouble, trials, and diffi-

* Ascribed to Charles I.

† Ps. xliii. 1-3.

culties away ; but that it will support him under them, and carry him safely through them, how great soever they may be. It will not keep us from trials. Why should it ? Trials are sent to improve us, to bring us nearer to GOD. Nay, in the deep mystery of GOD, the very Captain of our salvation, the virgin-born, the Holy One, was made “ perfect by suffering.”* “ He went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain ; He entered not into His glory, before He was crucified.”† If the head, then, of the Church was constrained to suffer trial and hardship, why should the members of the Church, which is His body, expect to escape them ? If He, the only begotten SON of GOD, born before all creation,‡ must needs suffer, we, who are by adoption His younger brethren,|| in the flesh and in the spirit, have no right to look for less ; and therefore protection from trial is not promised,

* Heb. ii. 10. † Office for the Visitation of the Sick.

‡ Col. i. 15, *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*.

§ Rom. viii. 29.

neither to the Church, nor to any of its members ; but to every member of the Church, whatever his worldly station may be, who seeks for the blessing promised in the text, assurance has been given that he shall be more than conqueror, through Him who loved him,* and gave Himself for him. Yes, all who would prosper, in any station or in any course, must be content to forsake that wisdom, which will be independent of GOD, which the Apostle calls "the wisdom of this world," and says that it is "foolishness with GOD,"† and must seek to, and abide by, that high Christian principle, which is sometimes called "the fear of GOD," sometimes "the wisdom which is from above,"‡ but which often-times, as is natural, is evil spoken of by the world.

In whatever station of life, then, you may be placed, if you wish to be honoured while you live, and regretted when you die ; if you wish

* Rom. viii. 37.

† 1 Cor. iii. 19.

‡ James iii. 17.

to have peace in your own breast, and to be a means of blessing to them who are dependent on you ; if you would have calm enjoyment of prosperity, and cheerful contentment in adversity ;—and remember this, that however bright the prospect may now be, adversity *will* come, and, therefore, if a man would have but the wisdom of the ant, he should prepare for that winter during the summer of prosperity, as Solomon speaks, “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not.”*—If you would have hope in your death, and rest in your grave, and joy in your resurrection, let the principle of our text be the pole-star of your mind, the mainspring of your actions, the centre round which your whole course revolves : “Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

* Eccles. xii. 1.

Now to God, only wise, the King of kings,
and Lord of lords, let us, with humility and
thankfulness, ascribe all glory, majesty, and
dominion, now and evermore.

SERMON II.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATT. vi. 33.

THESE words were spoken by our blessed LORD with a view to encourage all men to cast their care upon GOD, who careth for them (1 Peter, v. 7): and as an assurance that they may safely follow the advice which He had given them just before. For in the verses immediately preceding the text, He had cautioned men not to seek too eagerly any of the things of this world; not to make them the chief object of their lives; nor to be careful and anxious, even about

the necessaries of this life, as though they distrusted GOD's providence: but, in the fullest confidence and reliance upon His succour, who has chosen them to be His servants, to set their eyes stedfastly upon the goal placed before them; and then, through evil report or good report, in peace or war, amidst plenty or scarcity, to march on their heavenward way; conscious of the presence of Him who is invisible; of the support of Him without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground; and of the supply of Him "Who stills the wailing sea-bird on the hungry shore."^{*}

This is that practical faith, without which it is impossible to please GOD, and by which a man believes not only that there is a GOD,—for the devils do that and tremble,—but that "He is a rewarder" and protector "of them who diligently seek Him."[†] Such faith had Abraham, when, at GOD's bidding, he left his house and

* Christian Year.

† Heb. xi. 6.

country to do GOD better service in a foreign land : such faith had Daniel, when he cheerfully consented to be thrown into the den of lions, sooner than dishonour Him whom he owned for his GOD ; and such faith dwelt with the Apostles, when, for the service of JESUS CHRIST, they forsook all and followed Him.

Such faith as this must be the secret spring, the support and stay of a Christian's life, let him be placed in what circumstances he may : but then especially does it shine forth to the glory of GOD, in times of difficulty and danger. He who takes any other rule than this, will ever be wavering and uncertain in his course, trimming his boat to suit first this breeze and then that, and putting human wisdom in competition with, or above the Divine commands, to the shame and grief of his friends, and to the scorn and ridicule of his enemies, and of them that hate him. It is utterly impossible that any man, in times of distress and persecution, can preserve the straightforward line of duty, in whose breast

this high and sustaining principle is not implanted.

It is probable that most men will see the propriety of placing this matter before our eyes in times like the present. For there seems little likelihood that that security and peace, which have been so long vouchsafed to us, will be continued to us much longer. Every thing combines to make it probable that times of confusion and trouble are coming upon us, such as we have not had for centuries : times when all men will be put to the proof, and it will be seen of what they are made : and when the servants of God and the LORD JESUS CHRIST will have an opportunity of earning the martyr's or confessor's crown, by their patient and constant adherence to His cause, regardless of every thing which might allure or frighten them from the path of duty. If such times are at hand, it will be our wisdom, as Christian warriors, to count the cost ; to make use of the short breathing time allowed to us to look over the weapons of our

heavenly armoury, and to furbish and brighten “the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*

Let us take, then, our Master’s cross for our badge ; His crown of thorns for the wreath of our crest of hope, which is the crown of immortality ; and let our motto be chosen from the words of our text, “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” In other words, “ Do your duty, and leave the rest to God.” Let not a Christian stand upon lower ground than a heathen, nor the principle in which the worshipper of idols gloried, “ *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum,*” be deemed too exalted for the servants of the King of Heaven. Surely woe is to be feared for that country, in which they who are in authority teach the people that it is lawful “ to do evil that good may come.”

* Ephes. vi. 16.

For if this be not to bow the knee to Baal ; if this be not to honour the Prince of Darkness ; if this be not to worship the author of evil rather than the Giver of all good ; if this be not to compel the servants of GOD to wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places, there is no meaning in words. It is not for sinful man, of his own mind, to say what fate is in store for those who do and say thus ; but, at least, the words of Scripture concerning them may be repeated, “ whose damnation is just.”

Let no thought of base, time-serving expediency, let no whisper of cowardly human wisdom, induce you to compromise one iota of your duty, in the childish hope of averting the storm or keeping your own neck out of danger. You will only deserve the ruin which you dread ; you will only secure your defeat, by putting honourable resistance out of your power ; you will only deprive yourself of that eternal recompence and reward, to which, by GOD’s mercy, through CHRIST, you might otherwise have

attained. Let our great Captain's oft-repeated words ring in the ears of all who are faint and irresolute, "whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it,"—"he shall keep it unto life eternal."*

But though most or all men must admit that these considerations are applicable to the times in which we live, few, comparatively, will be willing to apply them to themselves, "for they are not all Israel that are of Israel;"† and there is as much difference between those who, in common, bear the honoured name of Christians, as there was between Ahab and Elijah, and between Herod and John the Baptist. It will be well for us therefore to inquire briefly how far, in the ordinary course of our duty, the high Christian principle of which we have speaking is the guide of our conduct. If we are not wont in times of peace to walk according to this

* Luke xvii. 33. ix. 24. John xii. 25. † Rom. ix. 6.

rule, there can be little reason to think that it will stand us in much stead in time of war. “He who is faithful in that which is least, will, indeed, be faithful in that which is much: but he that is unjust in the least will be unjust also in much.”*

The things which will be tried by this rule in the day of judgment are our thoughts, our words, and our actions. These then let us examine beforehand, while yet there is time, and the means of grace still within our reach, by which we may be enabled to amend whatever we find amiss. And first let us speak of our actions or general conduct. We must remember that this rule is to guide us in all things, and at all times. It is not only in the direct employments of religion, that we are to seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, but in the every-day employments of the world: nor is this rule to be applied only at particular

* Luke xvi. 10.

times, as if it were reserved like a state dress for fête and collar days ; but in every day of our lives, and in all the employments of every day, we are to strive to hallow all, directly or indirectly, to our Master's service, by " seeking first His kingdom," and " doing all to the glory of GOD." Any thing which falls short of this, falls short of Christianity. And it is not only the rule for all times, and all employments, but also for all men in all stations. For it is not the Clergy only who are bound to honour GOD in the *whole* course of their lives, but the laity also : and when it is said, as it is sometimes, that a layman may do what a clergyman may not, the thing is spoken without due regard either to reason or revelation. For the reason why any thing is so wrong in a clergyman is because it is contrary to what he teaches ; and the reason why it is so wrong in a layman, is because it is contrary to what he is taught : and where is the difference between the two ? For in either case it is done against knowledge, and

both are under the same obligations (the vows of baptism and confirmation) to renounce the same things.

Remember, therefore, in whatever station GOD may have placed you, the principle which is to influence your whole life is this, to "seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness." Now how far, up to the present time, has your conduct been thus influenced? Are you willing to inquire? It is probable that in this congregation there are none of the lowest stations in life: but there are middling, and high, and the highest of earthly ranks: and of various employments and pursuits. Let us make the inquiry in one or two cases which may serve for the rest.

Are there any engaged in trade and commerce? Do *they* conduct their trade and commerce according to this rule of seeking first the kingdom of God? If the answer is, Who ever thought of seeking the kingdom of GOD in trade? such an answer would only show how

very far the conduct and opinions of whole masses of people in a Christian country may be removed from the very first principles of Christianity. Each individual, undoubtedly, may so conduct his trade (and I do not wish to be understood as speaking only of those whom we call tradesmen, but of all who have any regular employment), as in it either to seek, or to neglect the kingdom of GOD. 1. In the means which he makes use of to promote his trade or employment, which may be in strict accordance with his duty to GOD, and to his neighbour, or, contrary to it. 2. In the eagerness with which he pursues it, which may be consistent, or inconsistent, with the care of his soul. 3. In the spirit which he carries with him, being envious of another's success, or rejoicing at it; puffed up with his own prosperity, or moderate with it; fretful under disappointments, or patient under them. 4. In the reference which he makes to GOD at all times: if things go well, being careful to render praise to GOD,

both by the expression of the lips, and by letting others share in GOD's bounty to himself; or if things go ill, still owning his Father's hand, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD." This is what distinguishes a Christian from a heathen merchant: have *you* these marks of distinction? This is how the kingdom of GOD may be sought in trade and commerce: have *you* thus sought it?

Let us turn to higher stations. There are those whom GOD has made legislators, and given them opportunity to seek His kingdom in this character: and the welfare and happiness of millions of their fellow-creatures depend upon their doing so. These may have a regard to the honour of GOD in all the laws which they pass, and then that which they do the Lord will make it to prosper, "for the throne is established by righteousness:"* or, they may put all such thoughts out of the account, and their

* Proverbs xvi. 12.

own and the nation's ruin will speedily attest the truth of what Solomon has said, "there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord."* If Christianity be any thing better than a name, there should be some difference between Christian and heathen legislators. Let the legislators of this country be on their guard lest the difference be *against* them; lest the heathen legislators of Rome and Athens rise up in the judgment with them and condemn them. For they gave protection and showed favour and honour to the ministers and temples of *their* gods, which were but wood and stone. Surely *our* God is greater than theirs, and his ministers at least as worthy of support as the magicians and soothsayers of paganism. Shall I apply this rule to a higher station yet? "GOD is no respecter of persons," nor does He permit His ministers to be. Therefore let it be said, that they who occupy the highest places

* Prov. xxi. 30.

of the earth, have, of all others, most need to place this rule before them, and in all their thoughts, words, and works, to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness:” most need as concerns both themselves and others: as concerns themselves, because “to whom much is given, of him will much be required;”* as concerns others, by the force of example, for “a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”†

Thus much may suffice for actions, or general conduct.

Let us consider our words. In these also we may seek, or we may neglect, the kingdom of God and His righteousness; “for by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.”‡ The Master whom we serve has given us this order, “Swear not at all.”§ Is this order obeyed? The Holy Spirit has left this direction, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is

* Luke xii. 48.

‡ Matt. xii. 37.

† Matt. v. 14.

§ Matt. v. 34.

good to the use of edifying."* Is this direction attended to? Have you been careful, and prayed GOD to "set a watch before your mouth, and keep the door of your lips,"† that no expression might escape them offensive to the GOD of purity? or, have you employed the gift of speech to dishonour Him who gave it? and let a foul mouth utter the pollutions of a filthy heart? Have you given vent to oaths, such as make the listening angels shudder? to those evil whispers which crimson the cheek of modesty? or to those hateful words which make good men stand aghast?

Perhaps there is the less need to press this point in the matter of swearing, because, by common consent, it seems banished to the outskirts of society; so that it is not likely to be found except with those who, either think themselves above, or are certainly sunk below, the opinion of mankind. For many men will turn

* Eph. iv. 29.

† Ps. cxli. 3.

away from a habit which the world denounces as ungentlemanly, who would have been at little pains to forsake it because GOD called it sinful. From which we may observe, by the way, that forsaking such sins as the world decries, is no proof that a man is a Christian : for if he only forsakes them to please the world, he may be free from them all his life, and yet be as far from GOD as if he had committed them. The inquiry at the great day will not be sin by sin, but by men's love to GOD :* has that been with *all* the heart ? Did they seek *first* the kingdom of GOD ? Was it the *chief* aim and desire of their souls, so to live that they might please Him ?

Consider, now, how the case stands with regard to the thoughts. When, surrounded by friends and acquaintance, in the hours of ease and relaxation, in the midst of pleasure and enjoyment, the thoughts of Him from whom

* Matt. xxii. 27.

must come every thing you have, value, or hope for; when the thoughts of GOD and of His goodness, of CHRIST and His salvation, have crossed your minds, has the remembrance been welcome or unwelcome? Have you repelled the thought with the chilling answer, "Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will" attend to thee? Has the thought of Him, who died upon the cross for your salvation, been irksome, and checked your pleasure and enjoyment? Then one of these things *must* be true. Either you have formed mistaken notions concerning God, or else there was sin in that pleasure, there was guilt in that enjoyment; or, if not in the enjoyment itself, yet, at all events, in the immoderate degree in which you would indulge it. It is a false and foul calumny to say that true religion will ever damp the happiness of any human being. Say, will the remembrance of a Father's love check a son's enjoyment of any delight which a safe conscience may permit him? Will the recollection of the protection of our first-

born brother (so the Son of God deigns to permit us to call Him) make our hearts sad ? Surely not. Whose brow is so calm as his whose mind is at peace with God ? Whose hearts so light as theirs who have the “love of God shed abroad in them by His Spirit, which He has given us ?” The happiness of others is dependent upon circumstances : the happiness of these independent, and above all circumstances, resting in Him who knows no change, but “is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” It is only when a man will not, or dare not, serve Him faithfully, whom he has sworn to serve, that the thought of Him is unwelcome. Then, indeed, the eye which is ever upon him day and night, the ear which is ever open to note each idle word, may,—nay, they needs must,—fill his mind with apprehension, from which he vainly hopes to escape, by driving the remembrance from him. But will a man be more within the reach of peace, who has once more turned away from Him who alone

can speak peace? Will he be nearer heaven because he has drawn his foot one step back from the road that leads there? Surely reason itself may teach us that such a man's wisdom, and safety, and peace, and happiness, consist in obeying the Christian rule, in "seeking first the kingdom of God :" and letting his very recreations be hallowed by the thoughts of Him, who does not wish to see His children with grave faces and sad hearts, but merely to restrain their pleasures and enjoyments within such reasonable limits as may best conduce to His honour and the welfare of their souls and bodies.

Lastly, consider how far, in the employment of those worldly goods wherewith God has enriched you, you have sought first the kingdom of God. I am speaking in the presence of many great, and rich, and noble, according to this world, and, I trust, according to the next also. But have they considered this, that the riches which they have from God are *not their own*, but His? That they are but entrusted unto

you as unto stewards, who must render an account hereafter to Him from whom they came, for the manner in which you have employed them ? Will any deny that this is so ? I will not stop to argue with him. He who can think that the child who came into the world with no thought of his own as to his station, and as naked as that of the poorest peasant, is not indebted to God for all he has, is beyond the reach of argument. But if it came from God, then to God must an account be given of it : He who gave all, will demand how all has been spent ? Have you thought upon that question ? and considered the answer that must be given ? Consider, that if God had called upon you to spend all that He has given you in His immediate service, *all must have been forthcoming*. He did demand it of one man,* and because his heart clung to his earthly riches, and he could not bring himself to part with all, for

* Mark. x. 21.

the sake, and in the faith of CHRIST, you know the words which fell from our Master's lips, " How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven !" I am not concerned to state that He makes the same demand of all, though all will do well to have that passage in remembrance. I suppose that if St. Paul's direction is attended to, and a conscience made of the disposal of the rest, such a fulfilment of the trust may find acceptance at our Father's hands, through Him who died for us. What then are St. Paul's words, in which he directs Christian Ministers to fulfil their duty, by giving advice on this behalf ? He addresses the Bishop or Apostle of Ephesus in these words : " Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living GOD, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, glad to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against

the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* This is the rule which the Scriptures give for the rich,—has this been *your* rule? Perhaps it will be well not to receive, as matter of course, the flattering answer which our deceitful hearts would naturally return to this question: but to examine on what grounds it rests. Think whether, when the day of account comes, there will be any or none to say, "I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not."† If the money which might have been used in supplying our Saviour's wants (for the wants of his people he considers *his own*), has not been so employed, how has it been spent? Has it been squandered upon the vanities of this world?—lavished upon things which the moth‡ and worms are eating, while they look most proudly,—on things which rust and canker are corroding, even while they shine the brightest?

* 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. † Matt. xxv. 35. ‡ Matt. vi. 19.

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”* Or is it worse than this? Have the sums which might have relieved the afflicted, and made the widow’s heart sing with joy, and led the fainting children to bless the Giver of all Good, been employed in oppressing the poor? in turning away the needy† from his right? in showing how earthly power may for a time triumph against truth and justice, and make his heart sad, who has none but God to help him? Nay, God forbid, that any here should plead guilty to such a charge; “for their Redeemer is mighty,” the Lord of Hosts is his name.‡ But once more, have the riches which might have honoured God, and done good to men, to the giver and receiver, been spent in sinful pleasures and pursuits? in corrupting others? in paying the price for which the guilty sell their souls and bodies? in bringing sin, and so a curse, upon the nation?

* James iii. 15. † Job xxiv. 4. ‡ Job xxiii. 11.

And will such men still dare to call God their Master? Faithless, faithless servants must they be who spend their Master's money to the ruin of his people, and in the service of his enemy! I will not pursue these observations. There is, however, one point so intimately connected with the direct employment of this world's goods in seeking the kingdom of God, and one which, under existing circumstances, so loudly calls for remark, that I may not pass it unnoticed.

Cast your eyes over the surface of the globe, and remember Jehovah's words, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* Think when the kingdom of God will come, when "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his CHRIST,"† when the leaven which was put into the meal shall have leavened the whole lump.‡ But how little of

* Isaiah xi. 9. + Rev. xi. 15. ‡ Matt. xiii. 33.

this has yet been accomplished ! Can human aid avail to promote it ? Yes, surely ; for “ how shall they believe, except they hear, and how shall they hear without a preacher ? ”* But why then do not preachers go ? are there none ready to labour in their Master’s service ? Tens and hundreds are desirous to engage in this, which they count the most honourable of all employments. But why then do they not go ? Can a man find bread in the wilderness ? can he find shelter in the desert ? Surely “ the labourer is worthy of his hire,”† and “ so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel.”‡ Why, then, it will again be asked, do not those support them to whom they go ? The thing is impossible. Take the case of our North American colonies. The men for whom spiritual aid is there wanted, have left their fathers’ land because they could not support themselves ; and

* Rom. x. 16.

† 1 Tim. v. 18.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 14.

are earning a bare subsistence, at remote distances, among the wilds of the forest. It is impossible that such as these can afford means of even the very poorest support for their Teachers. But shall then these children of CHRIST be left to perish in the wilderness without hearing the Gospel of Peace? without admission to the covenant of grace? without the rites of Christianity? Great and rich in this world, the answer must come from you. Ye who, at GOD'S high altar, have dedicated to Him yourselves, your souls, and bodies, it is for you to say. If you, out of the abundance which GOD has given you, will give freely back to Him again for the increase of His kingdom, the Sun of Righteousness shall yet arise in those places, and make the wilderness to blossom as a garden, and our GOD will repay it back sevenfold into your bosoms. But if you will not, I say not that the work will be stopped; for it is "GOD'S work, and who can let it?"* but you will be de-

* Isaiah xliii. 13.

prived of your share of the rich reward, and will have refused to seek first the kingdom of God.

Bear with me while I state some ground for this appeal. With a view to make some provision for the spiritual wants of our fellow-subjects in those waste places, king William III encouraged by royal charter the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which is in immediate connexion with our Church, being under the presidentship of all our venerable prelates. For one hundred and thirty years has this Society fulfilled the purpose for which that gracious king instituted it. All the instruction in true and sound religion which the United States received before their separation from us, and all that our North American colonies have received, has been through the agency and instrumentality of this society. The government of this country has formerly assisted the work with a grant of £16,000. It was not much to be sure: less than a three-hundredth part of one-tenth of the

national revenue, was not much to render back to GOD, for the sake of extending His kingdom upon earth. The portion of maintenance which could be allowed out of it to each missionary, was so small, that few among you would have offered it to a menial servant. Still the men who had fallen back upon old Jacob's covenant, "if GOD will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, then shall the LORD be my GOD,"* were content and cheerful to serve ; and, *on the strength of this support*, have embarked themselves and families in the undertaking. But now this small pittance is to be withdrawn ; and they who were content to feed on bread and water in the wilderness, if so they might do good service to our LORD, and save the souls of our fellow-subjects, are to have this *bread and water taken from them !* and to be left to utter destitution.

It is very true that necessity knows no law;

* Gen. xxviii. 20.

but surely it must be a mistaken view of GOD's government of the affairs of this world, to think that gain will accrue to a nation, or to individuals, by withdrawing the small pittance set apart for the maintenance of His ministers.

I will say no more : but when my fellow-servants in the Gospel of CHRIST are in danger of starving, and the cause of Christianity exposed to rebuke, I trust it will be allowed that I, as their fellow minister, am not stepping beyond the line of my duty, in bringing the case under the knowledge of those who, if they will, can do much to avert such a calamity.

It is true, indeed, that it has been declared by one of our legislators, that all reference to ALMIGHTY GOD, in acts of legislation, is "cant and humbug :" but I am sure that horrid blasphemy found no echo in any Christian bosom ; and it does not much signify to us, my Christian brethren, what the sons of Belial say concerning us, or concerning our God. And when in the course of this sermon, I had occasion to warn

the professedly Christian legislators of our land that they do not fall behind the ancient heathens, in the respect and attention which they pay to the worship, and ministers, of Him whom they acknowledge for their GOD, think not I said this because I fear that any power or combination of men can stay the progress, or check the triumph of the Church of CHRIST. No,— GOD forbid ! All His promises must fail before that can be. The Church may use the language of the Psalmist, “ When my father and mother forsake me, the LORD taketh me up.”*

Oppression cannot injure the Church of GOD. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, by the advice of the wily Magi, tried that in the case of the children of Israel, and it is written, “ the more he afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.” But let not that be forgotten which is added : “ the children of Israel sighed by reason

* Psalm xxvii. 10.

of their bondage;”* and “their cry came up unto God.” And was it heard in vain? Oh, no! It may please God for a time to suffer us to be oppressed, and praised be His name, for thinking us worthy of it! But when the dark strife is over, will not our pæans be again heard? will not the glorious shout again rend the sky?

“ Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea,
Jehovah has triumph'd, his people are free.”

Do not think that God will desert the Church, which His own Son has founded. What is His language to her? “ Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.”† No, no; when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.‡ The Church of CHRIST cannot suffer; her ministers may be

* Exod. ii. 23. † Isaiah xlix. 15. ‡ Luke xxi. 28.

permitted to suffer, and to glorify GOD by suffering patiently; but the Church cannot be injured. The gates of hell cannot prevail against her;* her strength is made perfect in weakness;† for when she is weak, then is she strong: when none but GOD befriend her, then the LORD Himself takes up her cause, a mighty GOD and terrible. It is not for her sake that I speak, but to warn them who are joined for her destruction, that, if they will not honour GOD by honouring her, GOD will be honoured in them by their discomfiture and overthrow.

Is the tone of the discourse unusual? When the house is on fire, the watchman *will* raise his voice above the dull monotony with which, in times of safety, he sings the passing hour. And if the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of GOD,‡ should not the spiritual watchman blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm § upon the holy mountain, and bid

* Matt. xvi. 18.

‡ 1 Pet. iv. 17.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

§ Joel ii. 1.

the inhabitants of the land tremble, for that the day of the LORD cometh, and is nigh at hand ? I know not what the wishes of men may be, but I know well the commands of Him who has set the watchman in their stations; for thus hath He spoken to each. “ Son of man, I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.”*

No earthly considerations shall prevent me from delivering the message which tends to the honour of that Master “ whose I am, and whom I ” try to “ serve.”† The smiles or frowns of the inhabitants of a world, which is even now crumbling under our feet, can have little effect upon those whose hearts are set on the next.

“ Brighter scenes we seek above,
In the realms of peace and love.”

* Eph. xxxiii. 7, 8.

† Acts xxvii. 23.

“As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.”* To Him let us commit our cause, that cause most dear to Him, the cause of the kingdom of our GOD, and of JESUS CHRIST his Son.

To whom, &c.

* 1 Thess. ii. 4.

SERMON III.

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL ROYAL, ST. JAMES'S, BEFORE HER
MAJESTY THE QUEEN DOWAGER.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATT. vi. 33.

BESIDES the regard to God and to Religion in general, which appear upon the very surface of these words to be recommended by them, there is, I conceive, a more special instruction couched in them, which a little consideration will elucidate ; and to which I desire to call your attention. For, upon a careful examination, it will appear, that both the terms,—“ Kingdom of God,” and “ His righteousness,”—here used to denote the objects which, above all others, should occupy the minds of those who desire

the favour of God ; both these terms, I say, have in the Scriptures definite meanings ; which meanings we must bear with us, otherwise we shall miss great part of the instruction intended to be conveyed by the sentence.

By "the Kingdom of God" is meant, that one only Church of God, which He sent His Son to found on earth ; which His Son, at His departure from the world, entrusted to the guidance and government of His Apostles, tending it Himself invisibly from above, and intending to return and receive it to Himself when the time appointed shall arrive. And by "Righteousness of God" is meant that gift of righteousness wherewith, as with a garment, all the members of His Church, all the subjects of His kingdom, are freely clothed when they are born into His Church and kingdom at the new and baptismal birth, by the washing of regeneration : which clothing of righteousness they who have received through grace, must, if they would profit by it, by the same grace keep unto

the end, walking worthy of their illustrious calling to be “the Sons of God,”* “heirs of God and joint-heirs with CHRIST,”† laying hold of the hope of eternal life, and in that hope “purifying themselves;” that as he who hath called them is holy, so they may be holy in all manner of conversation.‡ “The righteousness of God, which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST, unto all and upon all them that believe,”§ is that which our text here bids us seek,—not the work of our own hands, but the free gift of God in CHRIST to all who receive Him, and to whom therefore “He gives power to become the Sons of God,”|| “with the washing of water by the word;”¶ i. e. by baptism in the word or name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Thus the two great objects which our Lord desires us to keep in view and seek above all

* 1 John iii. 2.

† Rom. viii. 17.

‡ Peter i. 15.

§ Rom. iii. 22.

|| John i. 12.

¶ Eph. v. 26.

others, are the Kingdom or Church of God, and His (gift of) righteousness which is to be obtained therein. That which I wish you particularly to observe is, that this Kingdom or Church of God, in which righteousness is to be obtained, is *one*. The text says not kingdoms, as of many, as though there were many Churches or Kingdoms of God, of which we might indifferently seek one or another, and be equally sure of obtaining His (gift of) righteousness in any of them, but as of *one*—“the Kingdom of God.” And so from Genesis to Revelation, the same truth has been taught and insisted upon, more than any other in the whole Bible, that as there is but one God, one Lord, one Spirit, so there is but one Church of God, in which men are to seek His righteousness—one which He has Himself ordained; and that all the substitutes of will-worship, or to use a common term of the day, though not in the sense in which it is ordinarily applied, all the substi-

tutes of the voluntary principle* by which men invent and multiply religions, and what they call churches, for themselves, are counterfeits. It was so at the beginning, after the fall, among the first children of Adam. Abel offered to God worship which was acceptable to Him ; Cain, such as was displeasing in his sight. Seth and his descendants continued in the ways of

* I have said that I use the term Voluntary Principle in a different sense from that which it usually obtains : let me explain my meaning. The term Voluntary Principle is used in common to denote that mode of maintaining their Ministers by periodical voluntary contributions (by which they are made dependent upon the temporary disposition of the people), which obtains, in general, among the separatists from the Church ; in contradistinction to the voluntary permanent endowments by which in general the Ministers of the Church are paid. But by Voluntary Principle in this discourse, I mean, self-will, self choosing in religion, the principle which leads men to think that they may frame a religion for themselves, either from the working of their own reason, or their own private interpretation of the Scriptures, so that there may be as many religions as there are persons in the world, instead of receiving and obeying that to which the Church from the beginning has borne witness, that it is that one only religion of which the Scriptures treat : that which was once, and once for all, delivered to the Saints.

Abel, and observed the true worship of GOD, and were styled the Sons of GOD : but Cain's descendants departed from it, and were styled the children of men.* It was by the true worshippers of GOD ceasing to value their high privileges, and adopting what, in the language of our day, would be called liberal views of religion, and forming connexions with the erroneous worshippers, that all truth was lost in the world save in one single family ; wickedness abounded ; and the flood came and destroyed them all. Again, after the flood, when the same differences had arisen, and the world was divided between those who worshipped GOD according to the truth, and those who turned aside to the will-worship of idolatry (the form in which the voluntary principle showed itself in those days), it was not by confounding truth with error and treating all religions alike, according to modern liberality, that GOD's

* Genesis vi. 2.

blessing was preserved among men, but by a watchful jealousy on the part of the Patriarchs to keep the truth pure and undefiled, by shunning intimacy and alliance with the maintainers of error.*

When we come to the Mosaic dispensation, the immediate forerunner and type of the Christian, we find it plainly proved, that it is not merely against the grossest forms of the voluntary principle, such as idolatry, human sacrifices, and the like, that the wrath of GOD is shown, and that any thing short of these may be safely chosen and adopted. It is the voluntary principle itself that is denounced, and against which His people are warned ; the self-choosings in matters of religion instead of receiving and adopting that which He has chosen and ordained. Under the Mosaic dispensation, as under the Christian, GOD ordained special rites, and special persons to celebrate these

* Genesis xxiv. 4. xxvi. 35. xxvii. 46.

rites ; and it was not enough that in a general way men owned the true GOD, and had faith in Him : unless their faith extended to the receiving and using the special rites, in the special places,* and by the special persons He appointed, it did not avail to bring them to GOD, nor to bring His blessing to them. The voluntary principle in Nadab and Abihu, GOD's own appointed priests, showed itself in this, that they changed the nature of the rites which GOD had ordained, and chose to think some other would do as well or better than His. They "offered strange fire unto the Lord,"† and He slew them on the spot. These seem to be types of the Priests of the Church of Rome, who have changed the nature of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper, which CHRIST instituted in bread and

* Deut. xii. 8, 13. "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the Lord shall choose."

† Levit. x. 1.

wine, and choose to think it will do as well or better to administer it in bread only, instead of in bread and wine, as CHRIST Himself ordained. The voluntary principle in Korah, Dathan, and Abiram took another direction ; no fault was found with the nature of their service, but they chose to think some other persons would do as well or better to celebrate it, than those whom GOD had specially appointed : and to prove GOD'S signal displeasure at such will-worship, the earth opened, and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the congregation of Abiram ; while the fire from the Lord fell and destroyed the one hundred and fifty persons who, without warrant from Him, intruded into the Priest's office.* These seem types of those persons who, while they profess a sound faith, separate themselves from the Church, and gather congregations without, and in opposition to the duly ordained ministers of GOD. It was against this

* Numbers xvi.

voluntary principle or will-worship in religion that the second commandment was directed. For, as in the seventh, where one of the grossest of the sins of the flesh is mentioned, all others which result from the same source are included; and, as in the sixth, where the extreme result of the dark passions is mentioned, all tendencies to it are included; and, as in the eighth, where the utmost extent of dishonesty is mentioned, every thing of the kind is forbidden; so in the second commandment, which specifies the most degrading kinds of will-worship and of the voluntary principle, every thing of the same sort must be understood as condemned: every instance of the voluntary principle and self-choosing in matters of religion, to the neglect of, or in opposition to, the one only way which God has chosen and ordained.

When the Israelites were established in Canaan, the same thing was constantly enforced. I will not weary you with multiplying instances, but will content myself with pointing out some

of the most remarkable. After the separation of the tribes, Jeroboam, for purposes of his own, thought fit to discourage the true appointed worship of GOD in the Temple, and to encourage the voluntary principle, by setting up other places of worship at Dan and at Bethel; and rejecting the commissioned clergy, he made of the lowest of the people priests of the high places; whosoever would he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. But that none should think GOD indifferent to such conduct, the Holy Scriptures have handed down the memory of Jeroboam to all ages, as of *the man “ who made Israel to sin;” and have recorded* how, for this sin, GOD cast him off and deprived his family of the throne.* Nay, so offensive in the eyes of GOD was this sin, that when nothing else is objected against some of his successors but their abetting the voluntary principle, this fault is not passed by

* 1 Kings xiii. xiv.

in silence: as it is said of Jehu, who is praised in many respects, “ howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not therefrom.”†

In the kingdom of Judah, the voluntary principle showed itself likewise in setting up high places of worship, besides the true place which GOD had ordained: not that, in many instances, the people did not attend the temple which GOD had ordained, but that they also used other places which He had not ordained. Just as some among us at the present day sometimes come to Church, and sometimes go to meetings. But even against this, the least offensive demonstration of the voluntary principle, the Holy Scriptures bear constant testimony. It is uniformly spoken against, and if we observe the praise or dispraise bestowed upon the Kings of Judah, we shall find that this was the touchstone; whether they encour-

* 2 Kings x. 29.

aged or discouraged this working of the voluntary principle. Of the only kings who, after the division of the kingdom, are unexceptionably praised, Hezekiah and Josiah, it is recorded that they put down and destroyed the high places. Many other kings of Judah are mentioned with much approval, but the approbation is qualified by this exception: "nevertheless the high places were not taken away: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places."* Josiah and Hezekiah alone set themselves against the voluntary principle;† and, therefore, it is said of each,—"like unto him was there no king before him that turned to the LORD with all his heart, according to all the law of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him,"‡ and so it had been before the separation of the kingdom. David was

* 1 Kings iii. 2.—2 Kings xii. 3.—xv. 4, 36.—xvi. 4.—xvii. 11, 32.

† 2 Kings xviii. 4.—xxiii. 8.

‡ 2 Kings xxiii. 5.—xxiii. 26.

called the man after GOD's own heart, because he upheld exclusively that only worship of GOD which He Himself had ordained. But the first ground of reproof recorded against Solomon, at the very beginning of his reign, was this—that he himself used, and encouraged his people to use, the dissenting worship on the high places, which the voluntary principle had instituted.*

It is an important consideration, as will presently appear, that in these high places (at least in many instances) the same GOD was worshipped as in the temple, the same rites were offered, and offered by His own commissioned ministers,† whose priesthood was recognized by those who served in Jerusalem. Thus the light which the Old Testament, from beginning to end, throws upon the subject before us, is this—that all men should seek the righteousness of GOD, not in ways of their own invention or self-choosing, but in that one kingdom or Church of

* 1 Kings iii. 3.

† 2 Kings xxiii. 9.

GOD, which He has ordained to be the channel of his blessing.

That the New Testament should witness to the same truth, we might reasonably expect from this, that it was dictated by the same Spirit, who knows “no variableness, neither shadow of turning,”* and contains the Gospel of Him who was from the beginning, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”† We might further be led to expect it, by the testimony of St. Paul concerning the events recorded in the Old Testament. “These things are our examples;”‡ “they were written for our admonition:” for it does not readily appear how advice or example can be afforded, where the same *principle* is inapplicable: and so we find the case to be. When our LORD’s forerunner preached, he proclaimed, not the kingdoms, but the kingdom of GOD: our LORD did the same: and when, upon His departure, He delegated

* James i. 17. † Heb. xiii. 8. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 6, 11.

His authority to His Apostles, His language was still the same: “I appoint unto you a kingdom,” not kingdoms. The Church of the New Testament, like the Church of the Old, is *one*. Nor has it been left to the members of the Church to choose for themselves the rites by which they would serve GOD, and seek His righteousness, but they have been expressly appointed for them—as expressly as the rites of the old dispensation were for the Jews; he who would have the New Testament warrant for his admission to this Church or kingdom, must seek it in Holy Baptism: he who would have the same warrant for the ministration of the Spirit, must seek it by imposition of hands: he who would have the same warrant for communion in the body and blood of CHRIST, must seek it in the Holy Eucharist or LORD’S supper. And as the rites by which we are to seek the righteousness of GOD have been determined for us, so the persons who are to administer those rites have also been appointed by GOD. Though the

priesthood by carnal descent from Aaron has vanished away, a priesthood still exists: a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec ; of which the “great High Priest hath passed into the heavens, even JESUS the Son of GOD,”* and while He hath taken “ His journey into a far country, to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return,” has left behind Him deputies and representatives, to whom He hath said—“occupy till I come :”† even the chief pastors, the Apostles, or, as we call them, the bishops of the Church.

To the Apostles only did He address Himself when He gave the commission to baptize ;‡ to them only did He speak when He gave commission to administer the LORD’S Supper, and to do as He had done ;§ by the Apostles only was imposition of hands for the ministration of the Spirit practised ;|| and as the administration of ritual means of grace was left under their

* Heb. iv. 14. † Luke xix. 12, 13. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 16, 19.—Mark. xvi. 15. § Matt. xxvi. 20.—Mark. xiv. 17. Luke xxii. 14. || Acts viii. 14.—xix. 6.

sole charge to be exercised by them, and those whom they should authorise to assist Him ; so the control of doctrine and preaching was given to them likewise ; to them, in short, the whole government of His Church or kingdom was entrusted, when He said,—“as My Father hath sent me, even so send I you ;”* and when He said—“I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father hath appointed me ;”† and it is only as in connexion with them that He has promised His presence to abide in the Church ; for to them only did He address Himself, when He said—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”‡ Upon the strength of these and many other similar testimonies from the New Testament, the Apostles and bishops of the Church, upon most certain warrant of Holy Scripture, were, and are bold to say, in the language of St. Paul—“that men should so account of them as of the ministers of CHRIST,

* John xx. 21. † Luke xxii. 29. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 20.

and stewards of the mysteries of GOD ;”* to proclaim that they are “ambassadors for CHRIST, as though GOD did beseech men by them ;”† to affirm that “GOD has committed to them the ministry of reconciliation,”‡ “the ministration of the spirit,” and “the ministration of righteousness.”§ So that all who would seek the kingdom of GOD, and His (gift of) righteousness, must seek it through their means, to whom CHRIST has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And lest any, upon hearing these things, should turn round and say to them, like Korah and his companion did to Aaron,—“ye take too much upon you,” ye bishops, “seeing all the congregation is holy,”|| St. Jude has been careful to warn Christians against perishing in the gainsaying of Korah.¶

But, at the same time, the bishops and Apostles of the Church are as much cautioned against acting upon the voluntary principle, or will-

* 1 Cor. iv. 1.

† 2 Cor. v. 20.

‡ Cor. v. 18.

§ 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9.

|| Num. xvi.

¶ Jude 11.

worship, in regard to religion in their own persons, as any others are ; they are charged by St. Peter “ not ” to act “ as lords over GOD’s heritage, but as ensamples to the flock ; ”* they are not empowered to teach new doctrines of their own or others’ invention, but they, as well as all men, are bidden “ earnestly to contend for the faith which was once (and once for all) delivered unto the saints ; ”† and St. Paul expressly names it as one of the purposes for which the Apostolic order was instituted in the Church, to guard against the working of the voluntary principle. “ He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of CHRIST,—that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, by the sleight of men or cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive : but speak-

* 1 Pet. v. 3.

† Jude 3.

ing the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head, even JESUS CHRIST : from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.”* But it were endless to go through the list of passages all testifying to the same truth, which are to be found in the New Testament. I will content myself with saying, that as to an attentive reader of the Old Testament it will plainly appear, that the main object insisted upon throughout it, is the true worship of GOD in His appointed Church, and the chief sin guarded against is the voluntary principle of human invention and will-worship in religion, so in the New Testament any person who will take the pains to collect together all the sayings of our LORD and His Apostles upon these subjects, will find them more frequently insisted upon than any others : and that as

* Eph. iv. 11, 16.

there is but one head, so that head has but one body, one Church, in which, and by means of which, all blessings spiritual and temporal must be sought, if duly sought; or to use the words of our text, if men desire the favour of GOD, they must seek first His kingdom and His (gift of) righteousness which is to be obtained therein. I will only add one passage more, in which the inspired writer gives a description by which the Church may be known in all ages, when he speaks of the Christians of his day, who had received Apostolic baptism, and Apostolic confirmation, or imposition of hands, "as continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread" (the Holy Communion), "and in prayers"** or public worship; by which again we see that neither Apostolic orders without Apostolic doctrine, as in the Church of Rome; nor Apostolic doctrine without Apostolic orders, as among the dissent-

* Acts ii. 42.

ers of England, and the Protestants on the Continent, fulfils the Scriptural standard, and the LORD's appointment; but both must be observed by those who would duly celebrate the breaking of bread or communion, and prayers or public worship. To this truth, thus evidenced at every turn in the Scriptures, we all bear constant testimony in our creeds, as to a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, when, in the Apostles' creed, we profess our faith in "the Holy Catholic Church;" or, more at large in the Nicene creed, speak of the "one Catholic and Apostolic Church."

But some, perhaps, will think or say, if so many bodies of Christians fall short of this Scriptural standard, and are so condemned by it, is it not uncharitable to put it forward? Such is the abuse of the term charity at the present time. But it is no more uncharitable to set forth the spirit of the second commandment, in a latitudinarian and heterodox age, than to urge the spirit of the seventh in times

of general profligacy, or that of the eighth in to dishonest era, or that of the sixth when revenge is a prevailing vice. To oppose a prevailing fault, is at all times necessarily unpopular : but that is one of the burthens laid upon the ministers of religion, for the enduring of which they are not permitted to shrink. “Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear,” yet the ministers of religion, “through evil report and good report,” must “bear witness of the evil.”* For necessity is laid upon them, yea woe is unto them if they preach not the Gospel.† But that such opposition to any prevailing error is the truest charity, a very little consideration will suffice to show. For as all who sin against GOD by revenge, impurity, or dishonesty, will be condemned by the sixth, seventh, and eighth ommandments respectively, whether the ministers of religion enforce those commandments in

* Ezek. ii. 7.—2 Cor. vi. 8.—John xviii. 23.

† 1 Cor. ix. 16.

their exhortations or no; so all who offend GOD by the voluntary principle or will-worship in religion will be condemned by the second commandment, whether the ministers of religion speak upon the subject or not. And the question is not, whether we, by our silence, can screen them from the condemnation, which is the legitimate consequence of the course which they take, but whether we will be partners in their guilt, and partakers of their punishment, by forbearing to warn them, or by a faithful testimony at least clear our own souls, and do our best to bring them back to the paths of truth and safety. For this principle has been laid down for us by GOD himself, when He stated the duty and responsibility of those whom He has set to watch for the souls of His people: that if the watchmen see them erring and do not warn them, they will perish in their evil, but their blood will be required of the watchman's hands: but if the watchman warn them, and they turn not, they will perish in their

perverseness, but the watchman will have delivered his own soul.

Under a sense of this responsibility, I chose the subject before us. Because, at the present time, there seems a disposition in many persons to forget the paramount and exclusive claims which the One Catholic and Apostolic Church has upon those who would seek the favour of God in His appointed ways, and to run into the error of encouraging, in its stead, or together with it, the voluntary principle or will-worship in religion. And, therefore, I have set forth the testimony of Scripture upon the subject, to which, if need be, can be added that of tradition also. For the first fifteen hundred years after our LORD's death, no body of Christians in the whole world, held otherwise than has been here laid down; and the Church in England, through God's mercy, has held the same from the beginning until now. That if the united voice of the oracles of God, from Genesis to Revelations, can avail under His blessing to carry conviction

to men's minds, they may consider, that if they would avoid the condemnation of Jeroboam, they must avoid the course which led to that condemnation ; lest, as it was entered in GOD's record concerning him, that he was the man who made Israel to sin, so it be entered in the same record concerning them, that they were the men who made England to sin ; or if they desire the commendation bestowed by GOD upon Hezekiah and Josiah, they must tread in their footsteps, and encourage and uphold, exclusively, the one ordained Church of GOD ; and by so doing, we shall bid fairest to secure, if our GOD shall see that it will be for our good, the temporal prosperity of the nation.

For when our LORD bade men seek first the Church or kingdom of God and His (gift of) righteousness which is to be found therein, He added, as one source of encouragement so to do, "all these things :" *i. e.* all earthly benefits "shall be added unto you ;" so the Psalmist said, speaking of the same subject : "Oh ! pray

for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall *prosper* that love thee:" and when he said—" peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces"—he assigned the reason why they might be confidently looked for, namely, "because of the house of the LORD our GOD, I will seek to do thee good."*

That temporal prosperity accompanies the nation which has regard to the principle which it has been the aim of this discourse to urge; the history of our own nation may afford sufficient proof. For whether men will admit or not that the prosperity of our nation, while it adhered to this principle, was the *consequence* of such adherence, yet the *concomitancy* they cannot deny. They cannot deny that while all the nations on the continent, which, on one side or the other, have acted on the voluntary principle, (the nations in obedience to Rome corrupting Apostolic doctrine, or the protestant nations

* Psalm cxxii. 6, 7, 9.

discarding the Apostolic fellowship, and in too many instances corrupting the Apostolic doctrine also):—men cannot, I say, deny that while all these nations were harassed with every evil which can make human life miserable, while thrones were overturned, and dynasties changed, and noble houses laid desolate, and national credits broken, and foreign invasions, and all the fearful horrors which accompany them, rape, arson, murder, rapine, famine and pestilence endured, “all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” In England alone, the Established Church of which adhered both to the doctrine and to the fellowship of the Apostles ; in England alone was there an exemption from these horrors. Here, during all that time, property descended as securely as in the profoundest peace ; the throne was unshaken ; the dynasty unchanged ; the national credit, though taxed beyond all precedent in the history of the world, unimpaired, nay rather increasing under the pressure ; our fleets tri-

umphant on the seas; our armies unstained with defeat; and no foot of foreign invader allowed to pollute our shores. And this extraordinary and most remarkable deliverance could not be ascribed to our own power; for what is our country in size, that it should contend with the whole continent? or what are our people in number, that they should resist the countless hosts arrayed against us? or what our insular position, that it should more avail to save us from foreign invasion, than it did to protect the Britons from the invasion of the Romans, or the Saxons from that of the Normans? No: "not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the praise for Thy loving mercy and for Thy truth's sake."* He who had promised to His Church, "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth up in judgment against thee, thou shalt condemn,"† was to our nation while faith-

* Ps. cxv. 1.

† Is. liv. 17.

ful to His Church, what He promised to be to Jerusalem—"a wall of fire" against our enemies "round about."*

But such uninterrupted prosperity has had the effect on our nation, that the wise son of Agur† feared great wealth would have on him: we have been full and have forgotten God: have forgotten that our deliverance was from Him, and further, the special circumstances in which we stood while that deliverance was afforded. We have worshipped the strength of our own right hand, and the power of our own mind, rather than Him who made them both; have ascribed our deliverance to our own power and wisdom, and not to Him whose own right hand and whose Holy arm obtained for us the victory. And after deserting, step by step, the ground on which we stood, it seems to be now desired to carry out to its full extent that fatal principle, the very antagonist to that which

* Zech. ii. 5.

† Prov. xxx. 8.

has the suffrage of Scripture, namely, that all religions are alike in the sight of GOD, and all therefore equally deserving human support: the Socinian, which rejects both the doctrine and fellowship of the Apostles, with the Church of England, which adheres to both. It is proposed that we should be like the nations of the continent, and extend to the voluntary principle in England the same support which it receives in France and Prussia. But if we are to be like them in their relation to GOD and His Church, how can we expect to be otherwise than like them in His dispensation and visitations? Have we no reason to fear that if we tread in their steps, our wall of fire will be removed; that that peculiar protection which has been so remarkably displayed towards our nation will be withdrawn, and we left to share in common with them those fearful evils from which we have been exempt? That confusion at home and dishonour abroad, and that failing of credit, and foreign invasion, and shaking of

authorities, and destruction of property, and overturning of houses, and all the fearful evils in private and domestic life consequent upon these, will proclaim aloud to all the world, that in departing from our ancient principles we have cast away our ancient strength ; and give us reason to exclaim at the deposition or degradation of the Apostolic Church among us, as the daughter-in-law of Eli did when the ark of GOD was taken by the Philistines,—“ Ichabod, Ichabod,” the glory has departed from our Israel ! And that voice be uttered concerning England, which is said to have rung through the walls of the temple of Jerusalem at its last destruction, the voice as of GOD departing.

God grant that it may not be so, or rather grant that it may not be put to the proof.

Now to Him, &c.

FINIS.

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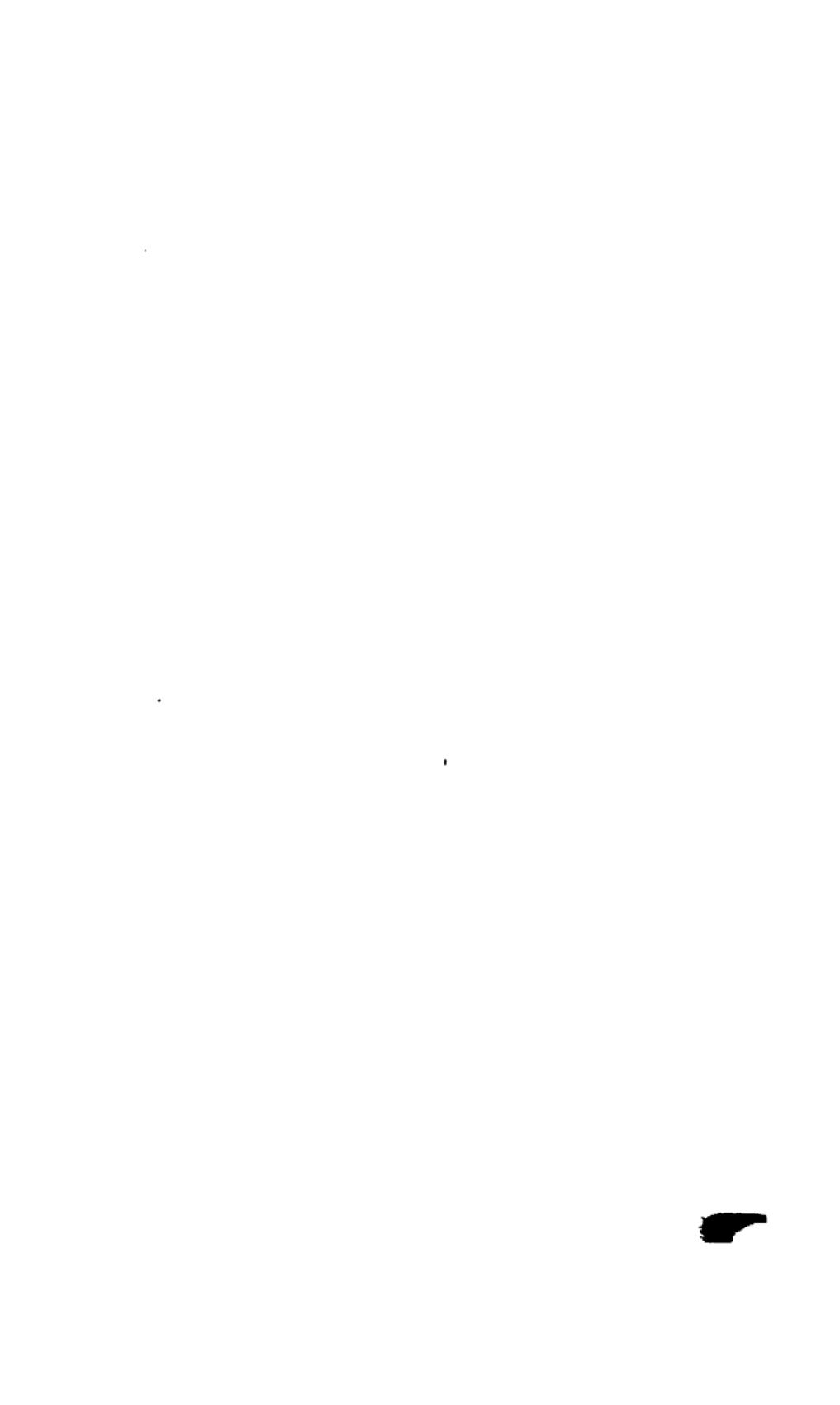
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